



Wisdom Park THE SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY
LECTURE SERIES

"Selective Thinking"

Shaping our lives through
conscious rational thinking with
the Sublime Eightfold Way

Sharing with Bro. Billy Tan



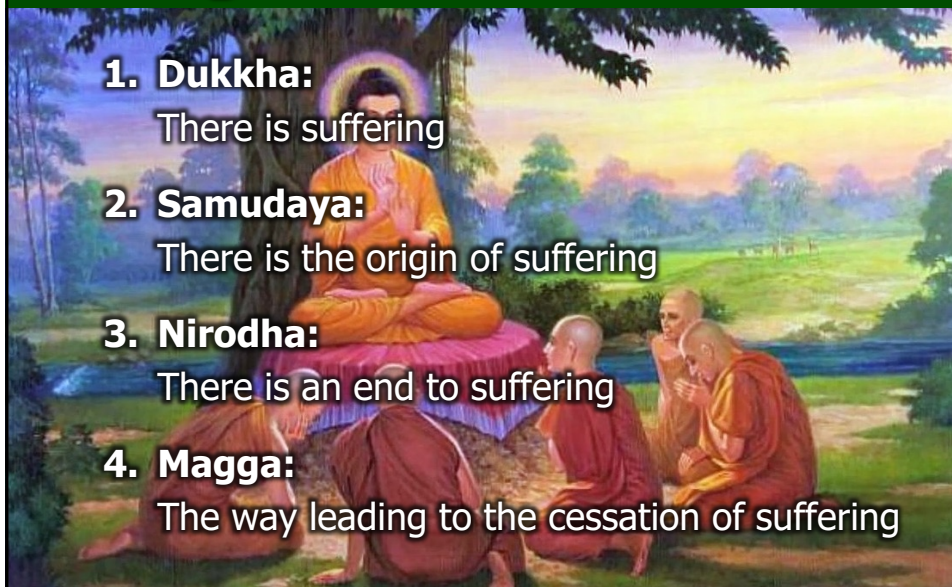
Synopsis

Explore the Buddha's teachings from a scientific and modern perspective:

- ⌘ The **Four Noble Truths** in a nutshell;
(The doctrine on the ending of suffering "*dukkha*");
- ⌘ What is suffering (*dukkha*) and how it arises;
- ⌘ The mind in terms of Perception (*viññāna*), Cognitive Process (*mano*), and Affective Process (*citta*);
- ⌘ Aroused by feelings, we invariably react emotionally ("*tanhā*") to emotional excitements;
- ⌘ **Selective Thinking** – conscious rational thinking that leads to freedom from suffering (*dukkha*).

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DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA Setting into Motion the Wheel of Dhamma

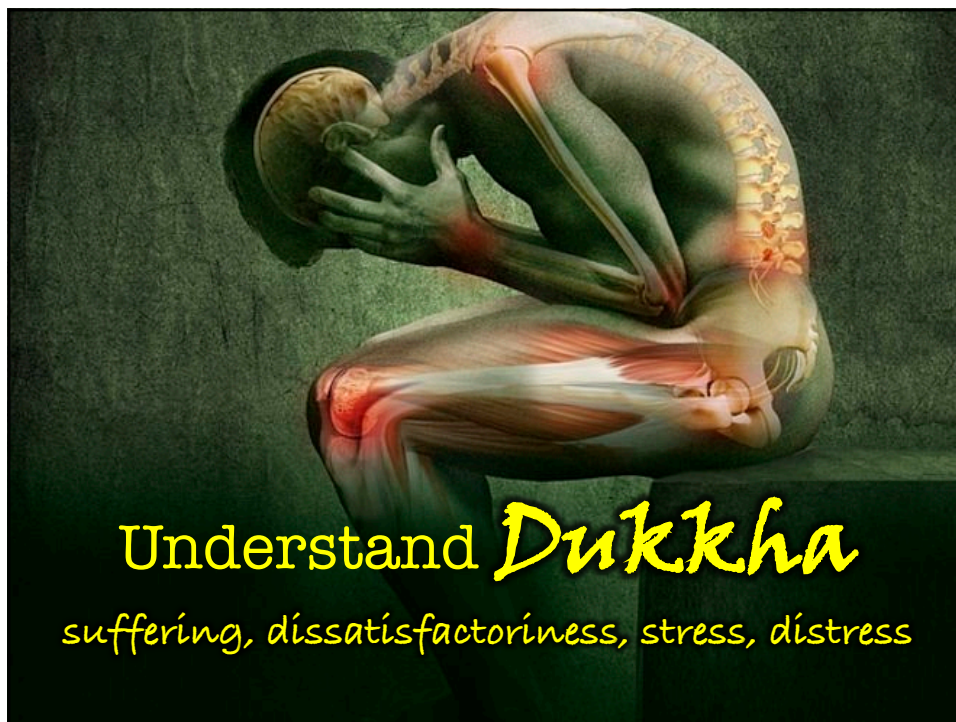


THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH



THERE IS SUFFERING (**DUKKHA**)

- This is the noble truth of suffering: (1) **birth** is suffering, (2) **aging** is suffering, (3) **illness** is suffering, (4) **death** is suffering;
- (5) separation from what is **pleasing** is suffering;
- (6) union with what is **displeasing** is suffering;
- (7) not to get what one **wants** is suffering;
- in brief, (8) the **five aggregates subject to clinging** (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) is suffering.



WHO ARE WE ?


❖ We are Organisms in an Environment

1. **METABOLISM :**
Life sustaining process;

2. **CONSCIOUSNESS :**
Experiencing the Environment through 5 physiological senses;

- SIGHT
- HEARING
- SMELL
- TASTE
- TOUCH

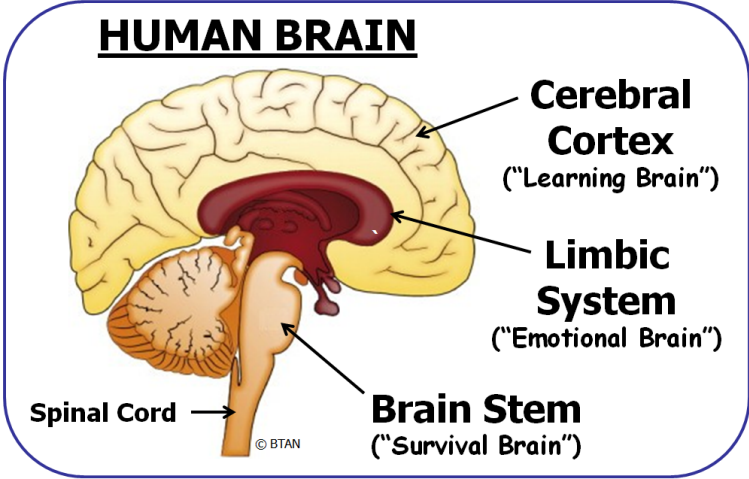
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OUR EVOLVING BRAIN


Our brain evolved over millions of years into **3 main layers**:

HUMAN BRAIN



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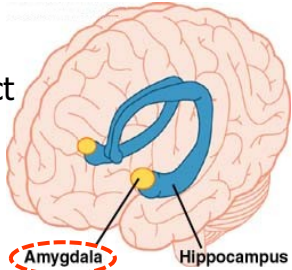


THE LIMBIC SYSTEM (Emotional Command Center)

- Deep within the brain's emotional command center there is a tiny structure called the **AMYGDALA**;
- AMYGDALA scans all environmental and bodily sensations for signs of potential threats and danger to the organism;
- Triggering feelings of discomfort, frustration, anxiety, anger, fear, panic – “fight, flight, or freeze” reaction to protect organism from harm;

Paradoxical Roles of the Amygdala:

- Serves as the “**Body Guard**” to protect the organism from threats and danger;
- “**Terrorist**” if unnecessarily aroused, leading to stress and discomfort.



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OUR LEARNING BRAIN

- ✓ Attention system, Long Term Memory
- ✓ Logic, Critical thinking
- ✓ Lateral thinking (creativity & imagination)
- ✓ Decision making, Goal setting, Planning
- ✓ Judgment, Reasoning, Rationalizing


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आहार-नदिरा-भय-मैथुनं च समानमेतत्पशुभरिनराणाम् ।
धर्मो हि तेषामधिको वशिषो धर्मेण हीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥


*Taking food, sleeping, avoiding dangers,
sexual activities, these acts are common
between animals and humans;*

*Ability to think, is what makes humans different,
without thinking humans are just like animals.*





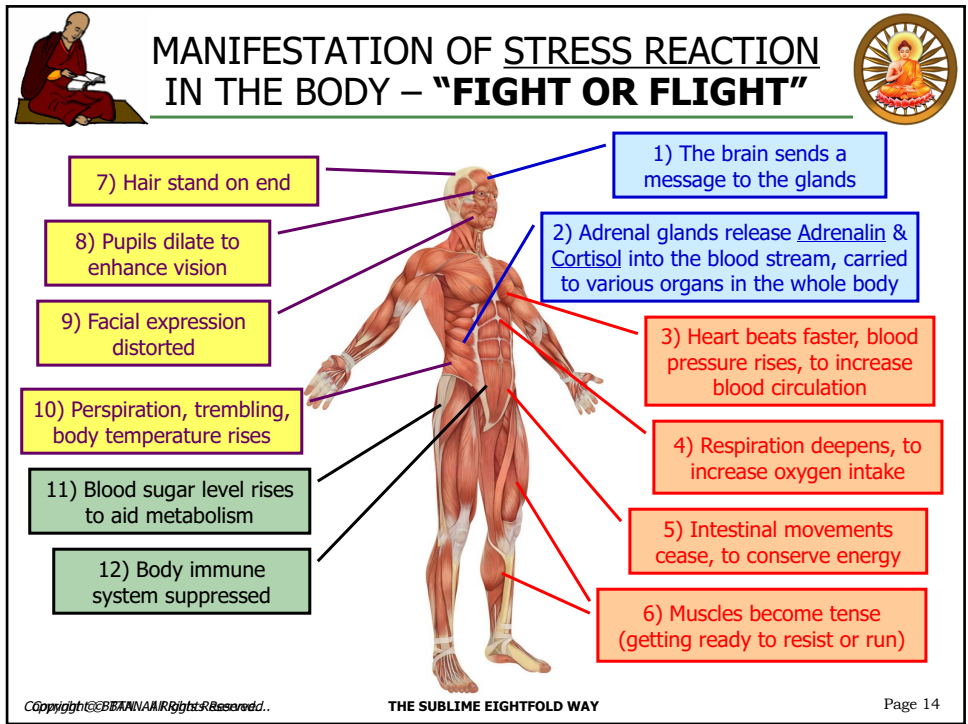
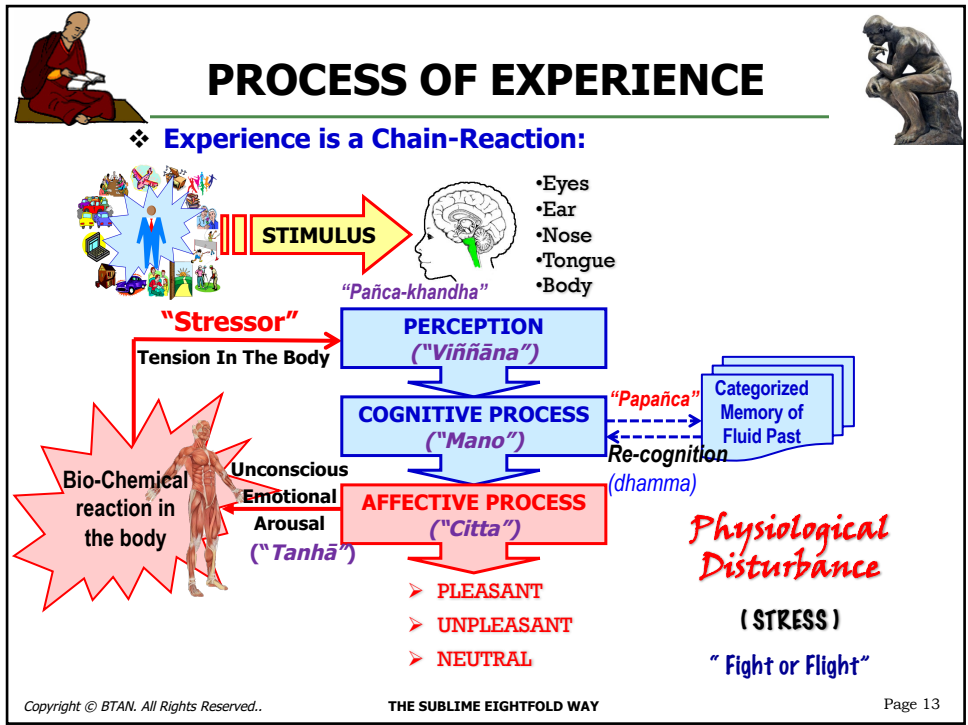
MIND AS AN ACTIVITY

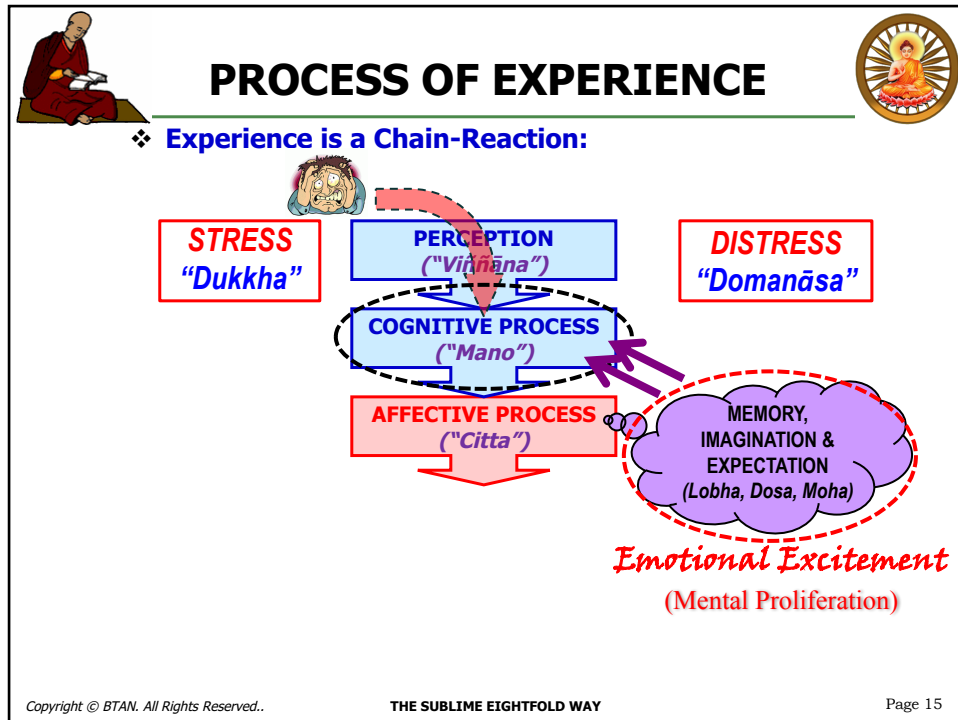


THREE PARTS OF MENTAL EXPERIENCES:

- **Viññāna** : Process of Perception (**Perception**)
 - what was perceived through the sense organs;
- **Mano** : Cognitive Process (**Cognition & Conception**)
 - categorized interpretation (*papañca*) of the perception by giving meaning (*nāma*) to what was perceived (*rūpa*);
- **Citta** : Affective Process (**Mood / Temperament**)
 - emotional reaction (*tanhā*) from emotional excitement to pleasant & unpleasant feelings (*vedanā*) giving rise to mood or temperament (emotional state of mind);
 - personalizing (*upādāna*) the experience leading to the notion of a self-centered existence.

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Emotions dominate the world,
emotions create distress;
Emotion is that one thing,
to which all are spellbound.

**Cittena nīyati loko
cittena parikassati –
Cittassa ekadhammassa
sabbeva vasamanvagūti**

(SN I.62 – Citta Sutta)



THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH



ORIGIN (CAUSE) OF SUFFERING (SAMUDAYA)

- It is this **craving** (*tanhā*) which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking here and there;
- that is, **craving** for sensual pleasures,
- **craving** for non-existence,
- **craving** for continued existence.


Tanhā = Emotional reactions ("craving")

Lobha – lust and greed for pleasures


Dosa – aversion and hatred towards displeasures

Moha – delusion of self-centered existence


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PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE



❖ Experience is a Chain-Reaction:



STRESS
"Dukkha"

PERCEPTION
("Viññāna")

DISTRESS
"Domanāsa"

COGNITIVE PROCESS
("Mano")

AFFECTIVE PROCESS
("Citta")

VOLITION
("Cetanā")



Lust / Greed
Aversion / Hatred
Delusion of "self"

**MEMORY,
IMAGINATION &
EXPECTATION**
(Lobha, Dosa, Moha)

Emotional Excitement
(Mental Proliferation)

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The 10 Unwholesome Kammās Akusala-kammaṃpaṭṭha



1. Harming life;
2. Taking what is not given;
3. Sexual misconduct;
4. False speech;
5. Malicious / divisive speech;
6. Harsh / harmful speech;
7. Gossip;
8. Covetousness;
9. Ill-will / hatred;
10. Wrong view / delusion.



BODY

SPEECH

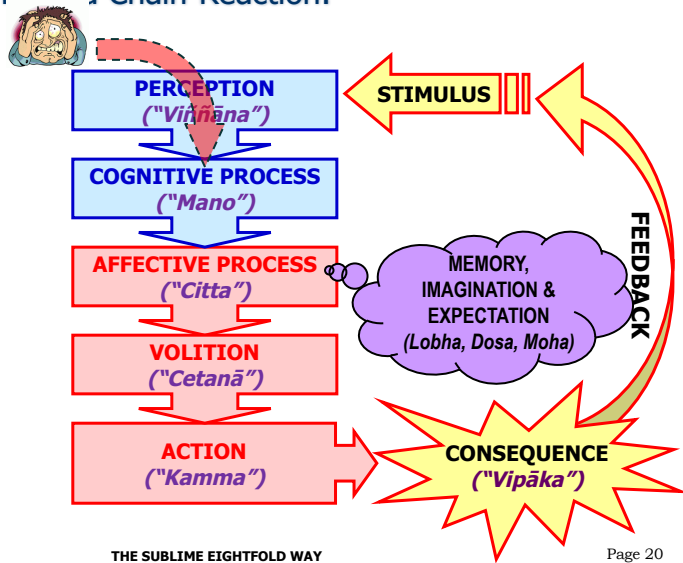
MIND

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PROCESS OF EXPERIENCE



❖ Experience is a Chain-Reaction:



PERCEPTION ("Viñāna")

COGNITIVE PROCESS ("Mano")

AFFECTIVE PROCESS ("Citta")

VOLITION ("Cetanā")

ACTION ("Kamma")



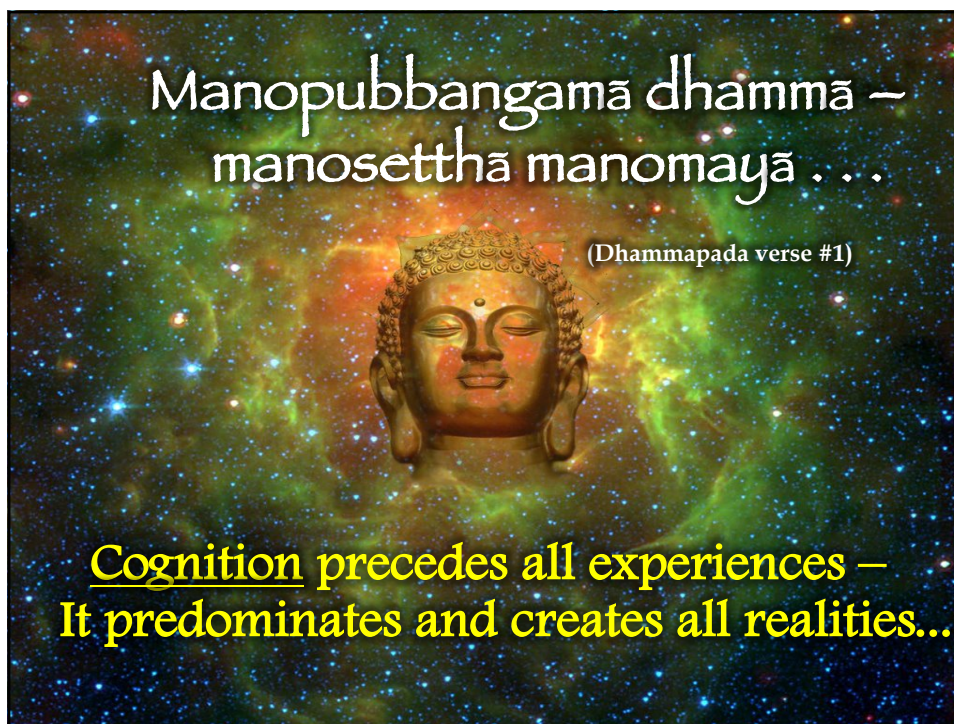
CONSEQUENCE ("Vipāka")

STIMULUS

FEEDBACK

MEMORY, IMAGINATION & EXPECTATION (Lobha, Dosa, Moha)

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DEFINITION OF "HUMANISTIC"


❑ *a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on **human interests or values**; especially, a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism and stresses on individual's dignity and worth and capacity for **self-realization through reason**.*

(Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

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 **THE MIDDLE WAY** 

Kāmesu-kāma-sukhallikā-nuyoga
INDULGENCE IN SENSUAL PLEASURES
Expression Of Emotional Excitement
By Releasing Tensions in Action





THE TWO EXTREMITIES

Atta-kilamathā-nuyoga
SELF-TORMENT & SELF-MORTIFICATION
Suppression Of Emotional Urges
By With-holding all Tensions




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 **THE MIDDLE WAY** 

Emotional Reaction to Sensual Feelings


THE MIDDLE WAY

Forceful Effort to Restrain Emotions




**Conscious Relaxation,
Introspective Attention,
Mental Equilibrium.**
SUBLIME EIGHTFOLD WAY

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MN114: *Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta*: To Be Cultivated and Not to Be Cultivated




1. **THUS HAVE I HEARD.** On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvathī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus: “Bhikkhus.”—“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. “Bhikkhus, I shall teach you a discourse on what should be cultivated and what should not be cultivated. Listen and attend closely to what I shall say.”—“Yes, venerable sir,” the bhikkhus replied. The Blessed One said this:


(FIRST EXPOSITION)


3. “Bhikkhus,¹⁰⁶⁹ bodily conduct is of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. **And bodily conduct is either the one or the other.**¹⁰⁷⁰ Verbal conduct is of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. **And verbal conduct is either the one or the other.** Mental conduct is of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. **And mental conduct is either the one or the other.** Inclination of mind is of two kinds, I say: to be cultivated and not to be cultivated. And inclination of mind is either the one or the other. [46] The acquisition of

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THE MIDDLE WAY






❖ **Conscious Relaxation**
(do not react, consciously release tensions in the body, and calm the mind – **pause & relax**)



❖ **Introspective Attention**
(gently bring attention inwards, mindfully observe bodily and mental activities – **introspect / THINK**)



❖ **Mental Equilibrium**
(still the mind, free from emotional arousals and excitement – **abandoning the 5 hindrances**)

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3-STEP SELF-COMPASSION

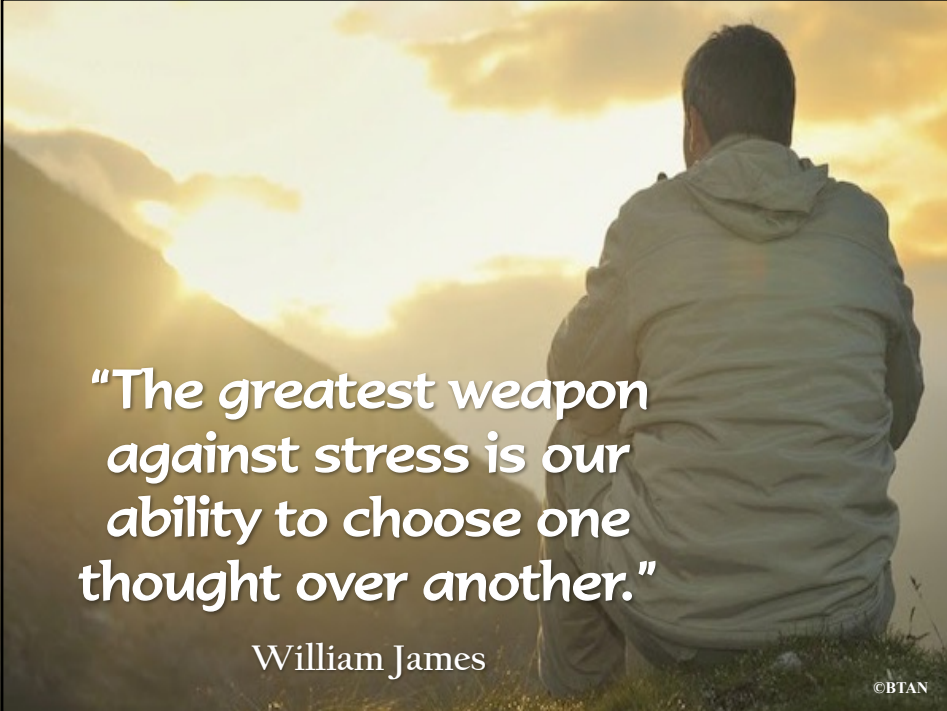


 ❖ **PAUSE**
(allow time for emotional excitement & anxiety to calm down and hormonal reactions to subside)

 ❖ **RELAX**
(take deep breaths, relax the body, and consciously compose the mind to respond)

 ❖ **T.H.I.N.K.**
(purposefully focus on wholesome & beneficial response to the problem)



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**“The greatest weapon
against stress is our
ability to choose one
thought over another.”**

William James


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Our Response Is Our Choice In Life



- **RESPONSIBILITY = Response Ability,
Our Ability To Respond.**

“ Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space lies the freedom and our power
to choose our response. In those choices
lie our growth and our happiness. ”



Viktor Frankl



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MN20: Vitakkasanthana Sutta Removal of Distracting Thoughts

1. Give attention to some **other sign** connected with what is **wholesome**;
an **image contrary to this image**, which is **worthy**, must be **reflected on**;
2. Examine the **danger** in those thoughts;
consider the **evil consequences** of these evil thoughts;



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 **MN20: Vitakkasanthana Sutta**
Removal of Distracting Thoughts 

3. Try to **forget** those thoughts and should **not give attention** to them;
stop paying attention to these thoughts and **stop reflecting** on them;

4. Give attention to **stilling the thought-formation** of those thoughts;
focus on **relaxation** and **calmness**, calming down the **activity of thought**;


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 **MN20: Vitakkasanthana Sutta**
Removal of Distracting Thoughts 


TRANSLATION BY VEN. DR. PUNNAJI: 

5. **Relax** the clenched teeth, **relax** the tongue pressed on the palate, and thus remove the thought associated with evil easily without exertion, by **relaxing and calming the mind**.

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THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH

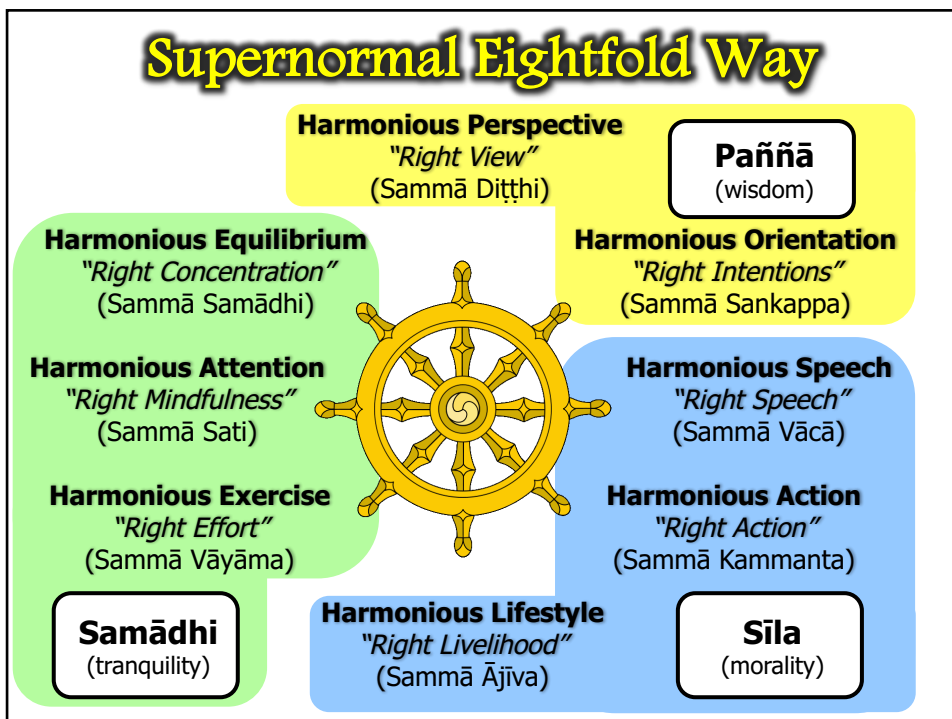



THERE IS AN END TO SUFFERING (NIRODHA)

- It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same **craving** (*tanhā*),
- the giving up and relinquishing of it,
- freedom from it,
- non-reliance on it.


Cessation of *tanhā* ("craving"), or **emotional reactions**, means stopping the emotional mind and bringing the mind to perfect stillness that is completely free from mental conflict between the **affective activity** (*citta*) and the **cognitive activity** (*mano*) which is the freedom from cognitive dissonance (*vicikicchā*).

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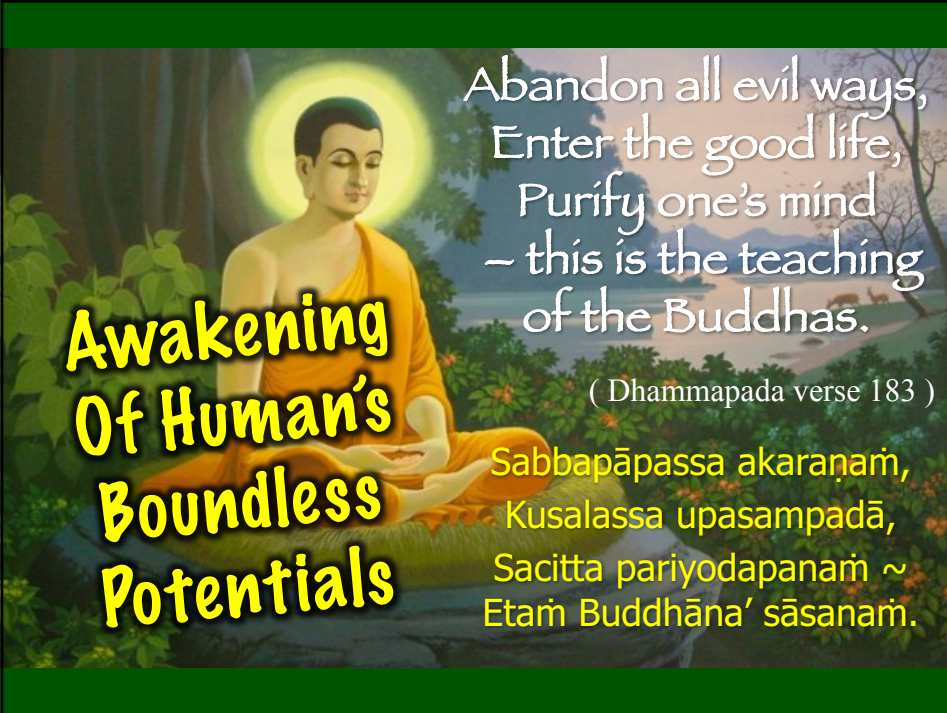


THE 4-STEP PROGRESS IN CULTIVATION:



- 1. Association with those mature in spirit** (*sappurisa sevana*) – This is a person who is aware of the fourfold reality of life taught by the Buddha.
- 2. Hearing the Dhamma** (*saddhamma savana*) – This is hearing about the Fourfold Reality: Problem of Existence, its Cause, its Solution, and the Technique of solving it.
- 3. Deterministic-thinking** (*yoniso manasikara*) – based on the Antecedental Concurrence (*paticca samuppada*) and the teaching about impersonality (*anatta*), which is a paradigm shift from existential to experiential thinking.
- 4. Reorientation of one's life** to solve the problem - (*dhammanudhamma patipatti*) – inner transformation of one's character.

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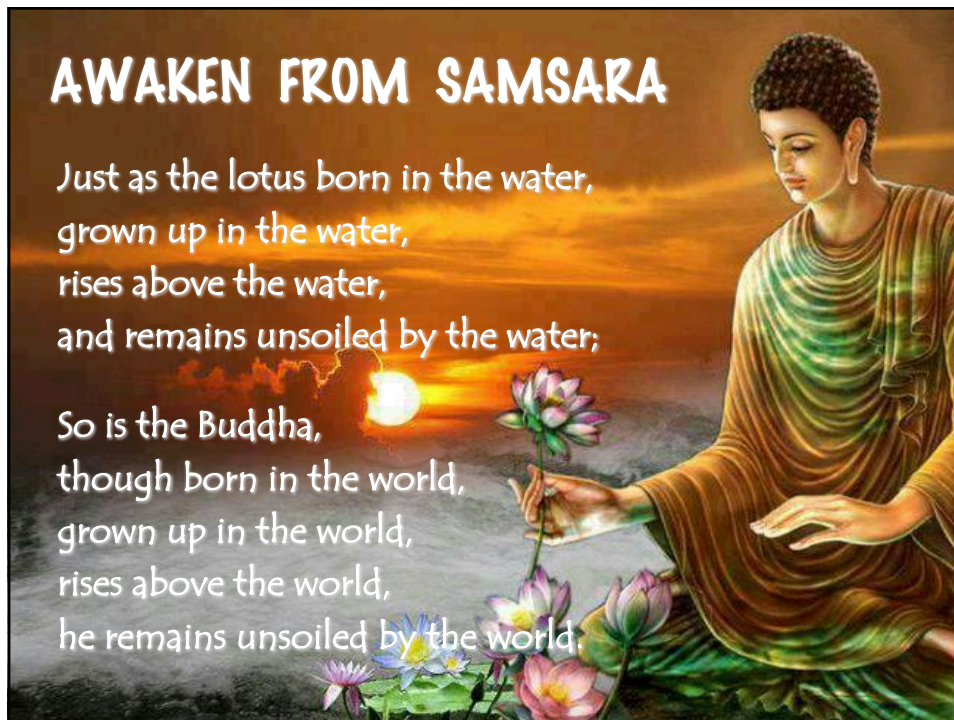
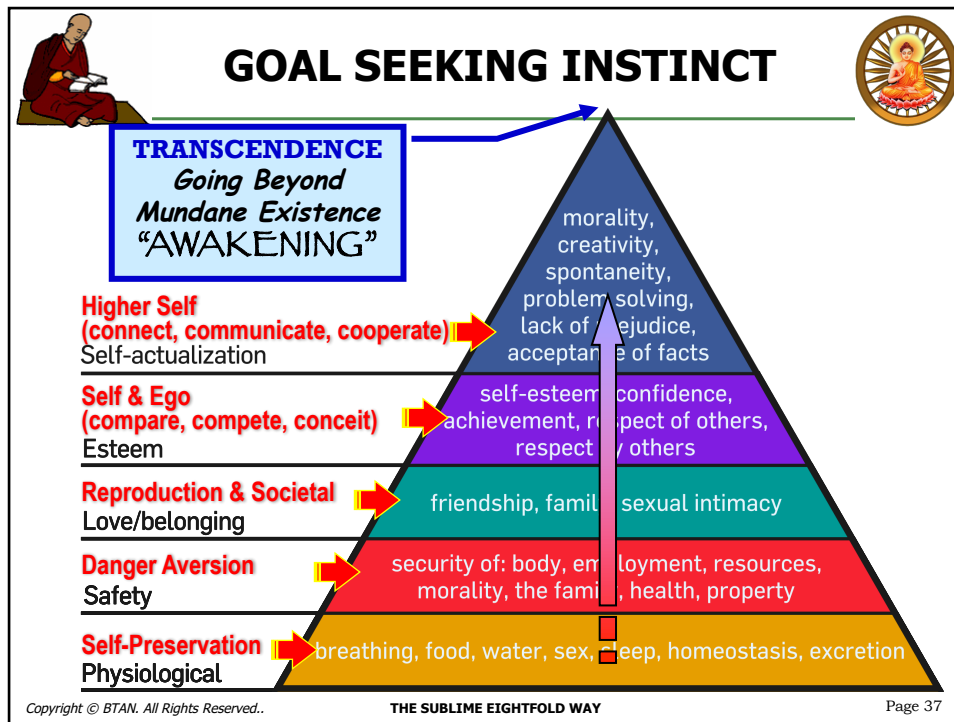



Abandon all evil ways,
Enter the good life,
Purify one's mind
~ this is the teaching
of the Buddhas.

(Dhammapada verse 183)


Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ,
Kusalassa upasampadā,
Sacitta pariyodapanam ~
Etaṃ Buddhāna' sāsaṇaṃ.

Awakening
Of Human's
Boundless
Potentials





CONCLUSION



Sharing teachings of the Buddha from a scientific perspective:

- ✓ Sensations and feelings excite our emotions;
- ✓ Reactions to excitement lead to "**lobha**", "**dosa**" and "**moha**" giving rise to mental proliferation;
- ✓ Conscious Relaxation and Introspective Attention calm emotional excitement and tame lustful and hateful reactions;
- ✓ Tame emotional excitement and cultivate peace of mind with **Pause, Relax, T.H.I.N.K.**

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Metta

**Send love when we see hatred,
forgiveness when we see resentment,
strength when we see weakness,
tranquility when we see chaos,
peace when we see hostility,
courage when we see fear,
hope when we see despair,
comfort when we see pain,
kindness when we see cruelty,
compassion when we see suffering.**

*May suffering ones be suffering free, the fear-struck fearless be;
May grieving ones shed all grief, may all beings find peace & relief.*



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